

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 337

By Beavers

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Staff Sergeant James Calvin Smith for heroic service to his country as a member of the United States Army and the Tennessee National Guard.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those veterans who, in their days of service to their country, demonstrated nothing less than the utmost courage and competence in executing their duties; and

WHEREAS, James Calvin Smith of Lafayette is one such Tennessee veteran, who rendered sterling service during the Vietnam War as a Corporal in the United States Army; when called upon again, during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Staff Sergeant Smith served his country gallantly as a member of the Tennessee National Guard; and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 1969, Corporal James Smith entered the U.S. Army; he received his basic training at Fort Campbell and his infantry training at Fort Polk, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, by August 16 of that same year, Corporal Smith was en route to Thompson-Knute Air Force Base in Saigon; because the base was under enemy fire when his plane landed, Corporal Smith was quickly introduced to the foxholes of Indochina and the heat of battle; and

WHEREAS, Corporal Smith soon joined other elements of the 101st Airborne Division, which had taken position near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the narrow band that separated North Vietnam from South Vietnam; for sixty days, his unit engaged the Vietcong on a constant basis, suffering regular casualties throughout the fighting; and

WHEREAS, with his comrades-in-arms, Corporal Smith spent a particularly harrowing twenty-three days near the Laotian border, in the A Shau Valley, a critical portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and, thus, a strategic focal point throughout the Vietnam War; during this time, his

unit was continually surrounded by Vietcong, who greatly outnumbered the American forces in the valley, and many of his fellow soldiers lost their lives; and

WHEREAS, much of the fighting during those twenty-three days centered around a hill known as Fire Base Rip Cord; in the midst of an intense firefight, Corporal Smith and another soldier descended the hill to retrieve ammunition; and

WHEREAS, on their way back up, a mortar shell landed immediately in front of the pair, and Corporal Smith's comrade took the brunt of the explosion; he fell backward into the Corporal's arms;

WHEREAS, despite any fear he may have felt, Corporal James Smith, putting his own safety aside for the sake of his friend, carried the other man up the hill to be evacuated by helicopter; Corporal Smith soon learned that his fellow soldier survived his injuries; and

WHEREAS, at the end of that twenty-three-day siege, when his unit was finally rescued, 325 of Corporal Smith's comrades were injured; seventy of his fellows had been killed; and two artillery batteries were completely destroyed; and

WHEREAS, Corporal James Smith left Vietnam on August 16, 1970; while on furlough in Macon County, he married his wife Linda, who accompanied him on his next assignment to Fort Caron, Colorado; and

WHEREAS, after five months in Colorado, Corporal James Smith was honorably discharged and returned home to Tennessee, where he was one of the first twenty people to join the newly formed Tennessee National Guard; he became a Staff Sergeant in Quartermaster Company 1175; and

WHEREAS, because of the unit's excellent training and combat readiness, the 1175th was deployed to Saudi Arabia in the first wave of the American military buildup after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in late 1990; and

WHEREAS, the 1175th was federalized for nearly a year during the course of the conflict, which escalated from the defensive Operation Desert Shield, designed to keep Iraqi forces from invading further south into Saudi Arabia, to the offensive Operation Desert Storm, which forced Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait and abandon all its claims to the small gulf state; and

WHEREAS, having successfully completed their mission in the Persian Gulf, the 1175th returned to Tennessee, and Staff Sergeant James Smith returned to his home in Macon County; after giving years of his life to the defense of his country, he chose not to reenlist when offered the opportunity on March 24, 1992; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant James Smith has received many awards for his gallant service to the United States; for his courage and sacrifice as a U.S. Army Corporal during Vietnam, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in connection with military operations against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam during the period September 1, 1969 to June 30, 1970; he received the Army Commendation Medal from the Department of the Army for Exceptional Meritorious Achievement in the Republic of Vietnam for his service from September 1, 1969 to January 31, 1970; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Smith received a Certificate of Appreciation for Faithful Performance of Duty, signed by General Wayne C. Westmoreland, as well as a Certificate of Appreciation from President Richard M. Nixon; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Staff Sergeant James Smith received the Combat Infantry Badge; the Bronze Star; the Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster; the National Defense Service Medal with two bronze stars; the Vietnam Service Medal with two campaign stars; the Vietnam Service Medal with sixty Device Two Overseas bars; the Bronze Star Good Conduct Medal; the Air Medal; the Expert Badge on M-16, M-60, and M-79; the 101st Air Assault Badge; the Vietnam Gallantry Cross; the Unit Citation Badge; and the Four Citation Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, for his service during the Persian Gulf War, Staff Sergeant James Smith received the Army Achievement Medal for meritorious service and the Army Certificate of Achievement for his personal contributions to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Smith is a veteran who honors the friendships he made during his service as well as the memory of all his fallen comrades; he has been a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, and The Vietnam Veteran Memorial Wall of the 101st Airborne; and

WHEREAS, still dedicated to family and country today, James Smith resides at his farm in Lafayette, with his wife, Linda, who is the Principal of Fairlane Elementary School in

Lafayette; since his military service, Mr. Smith has worked as a farmer, a logger, and an auto mechanic; and

WHEREAS, the Smiths have a son and daughter-in-law, Brad and Charity, who themselves have two children, Brady and Cate; James and Linda Smith also have a daughter and son-in-law, Deneshia and Chad Jackson; and

WHEREAS, throughout this nation's history, many men and women have been willing to risk their lives in defense of their country; some have made the supreme sacrifice, laying down their lives that their fellow Americans might enjoy greater freedom and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, those veterans who yet remain, those who survived the mortal dangers of combat and returned to their homes and families, stand as examples of hope, courage, and perseverance; the people of Tennessee are fortunate indeed to count so many of these distinguished individuals, like Staff Sergeant James Smith, among their ranks; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Staff Sergeant James Calvin Smith for heroic service to his country as a member of the United States Army and the Tennessee National Guard, thank him for all he has done to ensure the freedom and safety of his fellow citizens, and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.